

INFORMATION DIGEST

110901

NOVEMBER 9, 1973

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Congressional Aide Spies on Left

LARRY McDONALD
GEORGIA

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indicated otherwise.

For the past seven years, a secret right-wing newsletter called *Information Digest* has been delivering some of the most sophisticated analytical reports on the American Left to such subscribers as the FBI, CIA, and the National Security Agency. The *Digest* reports may be only one toe of a right-wing campaign of spying, massive dossier compiling, information trading, blacklisting, subversion of civil liberties, wiretapping, bugging, plots against progressive leaders, illegal suppression of legitimate dissent, infiltration of government agencies, and crime of all proportions.

The New York Assembly's Office of Legislative Oversight and Analysis recently released an investigative report on a secret "right-wing newsletter" used by the New York State Police to compile dossiers on over one million politicians, political activists, lawyers, writers and show business personalities. The report on the newsletter, *Information Digest*, stated clearly that the mimeographed *Digest* was received by over 40 subscribers and "was the string that held together a network of hidden informants whose information was recorded by police departments throughout the nation without the individual involved knowing the process and without independent checking by the police as to the validity and source of this derogatory information." (emphasis added). But there, the New York inquiry stopped.

A brief investigation by *CounterSpy* now confirms the worst fears contained in the New York report: the information was received and used by the FBI, CIA and the National Security Agency (NSA). *Information Digest* could be just the tip of a rightist iceberg of spying, massive dossier compiling and information trading, blacklisting, subversion of civil liberties, invasion of privacy, plots against progressive leaders, illegal suppression of legitimate dissent, infiltration of government agencies, and crime of all proportions. Experts consulted by *CounterSpy* including Frank Donner, of the ACLU Political Surveillance Project and Wes McCune, veteran analyst of America's right wing, were astounded by the sophistication and depth of *Information Digest*. Donner believes *Information Digest* demonstrates that the private, abundantly financed right-wing elements have better information on liberals and radicals than that normally processed by the government. McCune, who edits *Group Research Report*, a newsletter on the right-wing, was disturbed. Left-leaning lawyers who have examined *Information Digest* believe that, due to misuse of the data, much of the past seven-year history of the movement may have to be challenged and rewritten. All who have become involved with analyzing *Information Digest* believe it indicates that the right-wing privately maintained files that rival those of the FBI.

The Authors and Their Many Faces

The authors of the *Information Digest* are S. Louise Rees and John Rees, better known to the Washington, D.C. Left community as Sheila O'Connor and John Seeley.

The two initially came to Washington around Mayday, 1971, having established Left contacts through Abbie Hoffman during the Woodstock music festival. John and Sheila — offhandedly associated with several groups of street people called the "Crazies" and the "New York Motherfuckers" — covered themselves by including their names in the *Information Digest* in connection with Mayday and other anti-war activities from 1969-1971. Why anyone would believe that the pair could possibly belong to the "youth culture" is now a mystery. But they became familiar characters in Washington. Sheila, a huge woman, overweight, is at least six feet tall with a large frame,

small facial features, fair skin, dark eyes and long dark hair which she usually wore in a braid; she always dressed in dark, unobtrusive clothing, often jeans and a sweatshirt. John, also overweight and about Sheila's height, had dark hair, wore glasses, and spoke with a British accent. He explained variously that he was from Wales or Surrey, England. He usually wore dark sloppy clothes and often masqueraded as a priest, complete with clerical collar, which fooled no one, but in those days, who cared?

In July, 1971, the couple opened up a "collective" bookstore at 1247 20th St. NW which incorporated a long wall of bookshelves, a series of tables for newspapers, magazines and pamphlets and a section for a Gestetner Mimeograph. A small loft in back was used as a meetingplace and office. The storefront was given a dual name: The Red House — eight blocks from the White House and New Foundations — the former to provide movement connections, the latter to give a cloak of respectability for John, the "priest".

The Red House never succeeded as a bookstore, and its real purpose remained obscure, even to people who worked with Sheila and John. Two letters, drafted mainly by John, went out from the group; one requested five-copy subscriptions to the entire underground press; the other offered to a large number of foreign embassies in Washington, daily delivery of *Peoples World*, *Daily World*, *the Guardian*, *the Liberated Guardian* and other socialist papers for a weekly fee of four dollars. The first letter successfully established a flow of geographically and politically diverse alternative papers. The second, which also requested that the embassy "advise us as the means you consider most appropriate for increasing the contacts between your country and the tendencies we represent", never brought any response.

The only other stock was odd items from RPM Distributing Co., then a new local venture, and booklets from Times Change Press. The Red House continued as a one-man operation, 20 hours a week from September to December, after which it officially closed, obviously having lost its value to the D.C. police who rented and paid for it directly.

Towards the end of the summer of 1971, John and Sheila stopped participating in the Red House to become involved in prison work through the Institute for Policy Studies, where Sheila later obtained a job. After failing to assemble an umbrella organization called "Washington Connections", the couple created CCERL (Coordinating Center for Education in Repression and the Law).

A house at 1616 Longfellow Street in Northwest Washington became the headquarters for CCERL, which originally operated from the loft at the Red House bookstore. CCERL purported to combat police repression, illegal surveillance of protest groups, grand juries and political trials as well as to promote prisoner rights and the abolition of capital punishment. Ironically, CCERL is listed in *The Iron Fist and the Velvet Glove*, the latest progressive analysis of U.S. police published in 1975 by the Berkeley-based Center for Research on Criminal Justice. It now appears that CCERL was actually organized to collect information from such anti-repression groups as the Center for Research on Criminal Justice. A paid request for information recently mailed to the new box number for CCERL (PO Box 35, College Park, Md. 20740) yielded no response, nor was the request returned with "Addressee Unknown."

In September 1972, on the recommendation of a Howard University law student, Sheila was hired as a part-time coordinator of the local office of the National Lawyers Guild (NLG). Sheila immediately took over the preparation of the Guild newsletter which she changed drastically in format and

content, conspicuously citing names, statements, and meeting places at every available opportunity. (Naively, it was thought at the time that the additional "content" was the result of "new input" and "new energy".) Coincidentally, the new format also had definite similarities to the *Information Digest*, which John and Sheila were covertly mailing to the police, including large-type centered headlines and an occasional splash of dry sarcasm.

During the year and a half in the Guild office, Sheila coordinated several efforts with community groups, including the People's Tribunal (which sponsored hearings to investigate police brutality and particularly the murder of a 16-year-old youth during a police stake-out); the Police Brutality Panel, a coalition for handling police brutality complaints; and a panel to investigate a plan by the Council of Government (COG) to set up a large spy network with LEAA funding. Out of the COG investigation, Sheila helped expose the Justice Department's Operation SEARCH (a project to integrate all government computers), during the NLG's National Executive Board meeting in Washington in October 1972. She was elected to the local executive board in January 1973 and later to the National Executive Board in June 1973.

As office coordinator, Sheila was very efficient, taking notes at all meetings, organizing membership, donor, dues and sustainer lists — all of which were typed and disseminated to concerned members inside the Guild, and obviously, as we now know, to a select group outside. In retrospect, it is clear to Guild leaders that she also efficiently miscoordinated events, like the January 1973 citizen hearings called by Congressman John Conyers and 45 citizen groups to investigate the workings of the criminal justice system.

As the Guild contact, Sheila was assigned to organize the program for the second day of hearings. In the eleventh hour it was discovered she had done nothing to prepare the program. On being criticized by the main organizer, Sheila threatened to sue him and that "she would get his ass." The organizer, a prominent local community person, had to be dissuaded from making a public statement that she was an agent and had purposely attempted to sabotage the hearings.

Another example of disruptive behavior was reported from the publicity committee of the National Lawyers Guild Convention in February 1973. On at least three separate occasions during the convention, Sheila and John confronted press people (escorted by authorized Guild members), challenging their credentials and security. In the middle of a session, Sheila and John, who always sat on the aisle or in the back, would jump up, Sheila screaming at the reporter or photographer: "How do we know you're not a pig?" Sheila would get into loud, heated arguments and once attempted to physically assault a photographer. In the process, of course, not only were meetings disrupted, but tenuous relationships with the conservative Austin, Texas media were effectively destroyed.

Sheila and John would periodically disappear for days at a time during their stay in Washington. The last time they were actually seen was on the June 16, 1973 march to the Watergate by 10,000 citizens protesting Nixon's crimes.

Bad memories abound now. The pistol that unsuspectingly dropped from Sheila's purse one day in the Guild office. The rent-a-car, stolen in the name of the Guild chairperson. The guns and possible wiretap equipment found when a curious roommate at the Longfellow house broke into John and Sheila's bedroom, which remained locked during the day and bolted from inside at night. That same woman pulled from her bed and beaten one night later by John on a rampage. All these memories point out one fact: John Seeley and Sheila

O'Connor, a/k/a Rees, were agent provocateurs.

From the report by the Oversight Office we have learned that John has had a long career as a "spook". There is concrete information linking him as a paid informant with the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Police Department and, according to the report, he told the D.C. M.P.D. that he had also worked with the police departments in Houston, on the West Coast, in Maryland, in New Jersey and in New York State. He once offered his expertise in intelligence gathering on the Left to the Wackenhut Corporation, a private security service in Florida, which also manufactures surveillance equipment. George Wackenhut, contacted by legislative investigators, says John was checked out and found to be a "kook", but their report also says that good authority indicates he was paid for intelligence services rendered.

According to a former roommate, John would often travel to other cities to visit Movement people. Each time, she got reports that things became very agitated and problems always followed his visits. No one outside his roommates saw John very often, and even they did not know him very well. Little is known about him, though the legislative investigators did turn up an additional tidbit, that John Herbert Rees was an orderly in a Massachusetts nursing home before becoming a beneficiary of the will of Grace Metalious, author of *Peyton Place*. He maintained a mystique, brushing off any questions with intimations that he was into "heavy" things and survived by various illegal hustles.

Sheila seems to have ties with a range of federal and state intelligence agencies including the FBI, New York State Police, Maryland State Police and the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Police. We now know that she worked for the old House Internal Security Committee which became notorious for its defamatory withhunts against legitimate dissent.

A Spy in Congress

Sheila is currently an employee of Congressman Larry P. (for Patton; he claims to be related to General George Patton) McDonald, Democrat from Georgia. Born in Atlanta in 1935, McDonald graduated from Darlington School in Rome, Ga. and completed premedical training at Davidson College, N.C., after which he went on to receive his doctor of medicine degree from Emory University School of Medicine in 1957. He served four years in the Navy as a physician and flight surgeon, then did his residency at Grady Memorial Hospital followed by three years of postgraduate training in urology at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. He is a member of the Independent Methodist Church, various medical associations, Rotary, National Historical Society, the Atlanta Astronomy Club, and proudly proclaims he is the youngest member of the National Council of the John Birch Society.

When McDonald first came to Congress as a freshman representative he spent most of his time lobbying to be placed on the House Internal Security Committee, but instead Congress decided to abolish the committee.² Since at least April of 1975, McDonald has been regularly placing highly derogatory — not to mention false — information on dissenters and anyone else he doesn't like in the *Congressional Record*. (Unfortunately a Congressman can say anything on the floor of Congress without fear of being sued for slander or libel even though the information is obviously not so.) It is now obvious that most of his information came from the *Information Digest*, prepared by his employee, Sheila, or S. Louise Rees, as she appears on the most recent Clerk of the House report.

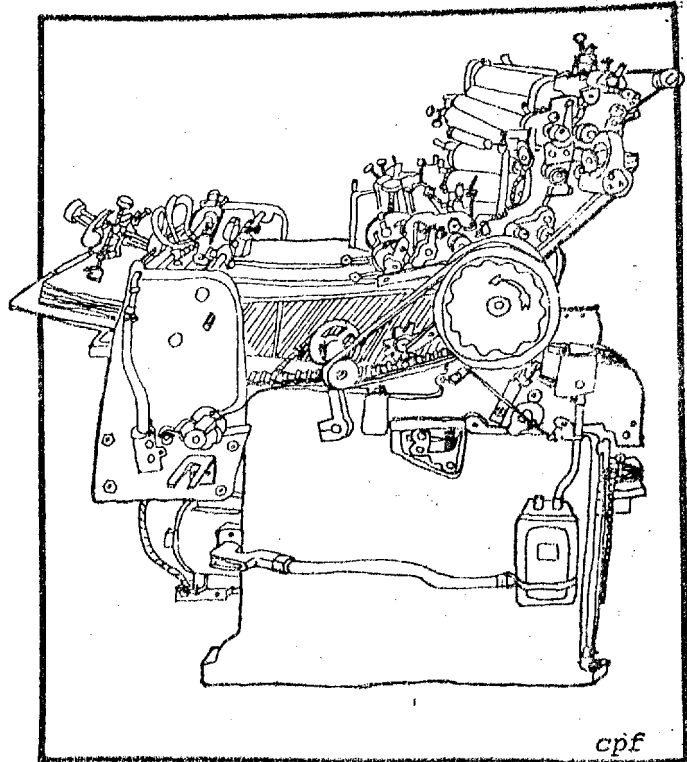
Some of the same information has also appeared in columns of right-wing commentators.

McDonald had an extremely well-funded 1972 campaign. His district, predominately white and rural to semi-rural, includes Cobb City near Marietta, the home of McDonald Douglas plants, and Floyd City near Rome, Ga., a leading center of John Birch Society activism. But the most disturbing information *CounterSpy* has received on McDonald is not his association with the JBS or *Information Digest*. His name has repeatedly surfaced in rumors widely circulating among the black leadership of this country that he was involved in meetings to raise money to assassinate Martin Luther King, Jr. *CounterSpy* cannot confirm these rumors — although we do understand that the Justice Department is aware of them and may have investigated — nor do we necessarily believe them. But their circulation by responsible leaders warrants investigation by proper authorities including the Congress of the United States.

McDonald is divorced. The exact reasons are unknown but the Capital Hill grapevine has it that he has some sexual problems centered around his extreme versions of patriotism. His wife was awarded the divorce, custody of the children, their home and furnishings and \$1,000 per month alimony plus child support. During his 1972 campaign, he was briefly jailed for failing to make alimony payments. McDonald now is also being sued for \$3.5 million by a widow who claims he illegally prescribed Laetrile as a cure for her husband's cancer. The highly controversial drug is banned by the FDA, but McDonald has been prescribing it for years.

McDonald's frequent tirades in the *Congressional Record* against those he believes are "communists" have primarily been designed to whip up a new red scare a la the McCarthyism of the 1950s. He has delivered detailed reports on a broad range of New Left, Third World, consumer, environmental, peace and justice and even paramilitary right-wing organizations and events, including: the National Council of Churches; the November 1975 Teach-In at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; the Center for National Security Studies; the American Civil Liberties Union; the Organizing Committee for a Fifth Estate, publishers of *CounterSpy*; NACLA; the Movement for a Free Philippines; the Crusade for Justice; the Rockefeller Foundation grant awarded to well-known leftist leaders; the Communist Party USA; the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees; the Peoples Bicentennial Commission; the National Caucus of Labor Committees; Trotskyite and Maoist sects such as Youth Against War and Fascism, Revolutionary Union and the October League (copies of apparent internal OL Central Committee papers were reprinted from the *Intelligence Digest*). McDonald seems to be singularly concerned with the National Lawyers Guild, however, as was the *Intelligence Digest*. Recently, he has also reported extensively on planning for the July 4th mobilization in Philadelphia by a coalition of Third World and Left organizations.

So far his demagoguery has not impressed the majority of Congress, but it is carrying on the mission of the John Birch Society — to influence the hearts and minds of Americans and eventually achieve political power by mobilizing a dedicated minority of anti-communists. The JBS, a predominantly secret society of 80,000 of America's ruling and middle classes, believes in the conspiracy theory of history: nearly everyone to the left of its founder, retired Massachusetts candy manufacturer Richard Welch, is a member of the "Communist conspiracy" or fellow travellers. The organization, founded in Indianapolis in 1958, operates at the grass roots level through front groups and inside other organizations across



the country under a zealous, disciplined and thoroughly indoctrinated cadre of organizers. In fact, it is organized like a "vanguard party" of the right wing.³ Larry McDonald is, in effect, a member of the "Central Committee." And a part of their propaganda machine.

The information in his "Remarks" to Congress, while far from totally accurate, nevertheless, is the product of a highly sophisticated intelligence operation. The same can be said for the *Information Digest*. This is not just the work of some "right-wing kooks" but of trained professionals.

Information Digest was produced under the aegis of a New York corporation called National Goals, Inc., begun by John Rees in 1968. According to the incorporation papers, one corporate purpose of the company was: "(To) provide an investigative service for various branches of government, State, Federal, and local and to prepare memoranda, reports, books, pamphlets and bulletins with respect thereto."

The Police Connection

After December 1974, *Digest* was sent to subscribers from Post Office Box 13144, Baltimore, Md., the mailing address of a mysterious C.I.R. Associates. Neither the legislative investigation nor *CounterSpy* has been able to discover more about C.I.R. Associates. The post office box was authorized to John and Louise Reese (and John O'Connors⁴ as well as John Norpel, until June, 1974, research director of Senator James Eastland's Senate Internal Security Committee. E.M. Hamm, the chief postal inspector in New York City, told the Oversight Office: "A now-retired postal inspector assisted the Maryland State Police in obtaining Post Office Box 13144. The assistance was in response to a December 1974 request from a Maryland State Police officer indicating that a Post Office box was needed by the law enforcement agency. They were further told 'If you desire additional

information concerning the post office box, you should contact Captain G.R. Grant, Maryland State Police Headquarters." Grant denied that the Maryland State Police "had rented" Post office box 13144, but has repeatedly refused to explain the circumstances of how the box was rented or used. On one occasion, Grant told the legislative investigators that the conclusion by postal authorities "was no doubt a product of inferences drawn . . . from the circumstances prevailing at the time the box was rented." According to the report:

"Norpel, now living in California, said he left intelligence work in June 1974 and knew nothing about *Information Digest*, except that John Rees runs it, and that the only reason his name appeared on the publication is that Rees let him use the P.O. Box for his personal use. But Norpel says he went to California in July, 1974 and cannot explain why his name was on a Maryland P.O. Box opened in December, 1974 except to say, 'You can put anybody's name on a mailbox. I had nothing to do with that.'

"At one point, Norpel's wife told the legislative investigators that 'friends' had told her to refer any questions about Norpel or the Reeses or the House committee to Otto Otepka, a former State Department official.⁵

"Norpel said that Rees was important not only to his committee and D.C. police but to the federal government: "The information which he brought before the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee was always right on the mark. It provided background leads for the Venceremos Brigade hearings

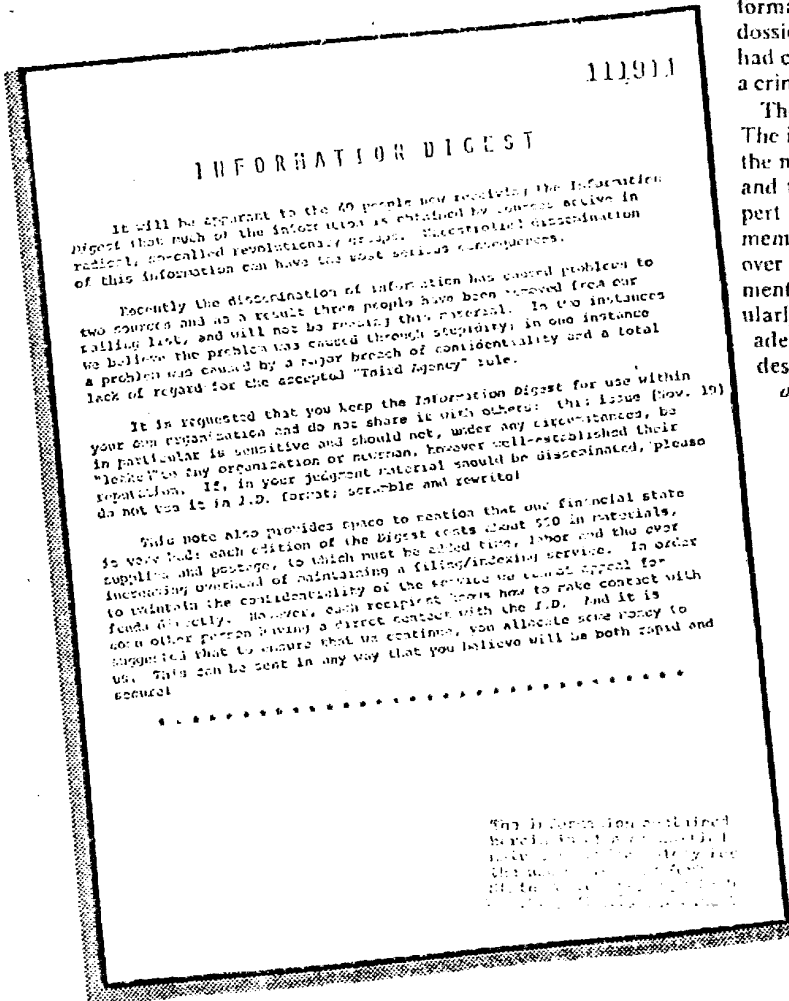
and on the so-called Left. Rees's information was invaluable to the intelligence community . . . I don't think Rees got his information from federal agencies. It was my impression that the federal intelligence community was more dependent on him than he was on them."

A case in point: Rees invited D.C. police to bug the Red House and the Longfellow Street house, a frequent meeting place for Guild legal people and Mayday activists. There has been no evidence of bugging at Longfellow Street, yet.

In the fall of 1975, the internal affairs division of the D.C. police and the U.S. Attorney's office began an investigation into possible illegal break-ins and electronic surveillance by the MPD's intelligence division. An internal affairs officer, an Assistant U.S. Attorney and an FBI agent interviewed Rees in a Washington motel room under the condition that they not ask Rees his present address, present activities or present work for any government agencies. Otherwise, his whereabouts have been unknown. Neither the legislative investigators nor *CounterSpy* have been able to track him.

Information Digest appears to have formed an underground link between willing and gullible police departments throughout the nation. According to the legislative report: "Many law enforcement officials say that Rees convinced police departments of his importance by tantalizing them with stories of violent plots and by taking information from one department and telling another one what he had just learned." The raw, unevaluated, editorialized and frequently derogatory information was used, according to the report, "to develop dossiers on thousands of patriotic and decent Americans who had committed no crime and were not suspected of committing a crime."

The police are not the only source, if they are a source at all. The information was also collected from publications, such as the newspapers amassed by the Red House bookstore; gossip; and the infiltration of various organizations. At least one expert contacted by *CounterSpy* believes that many younger members of the extreme right have infiltrated the New Left over the past few years to serve as informers for the government and perhaps for right-wing groups. They may be particularly active in the sects where dogmatic politics provide an adequate cover for rightists pretending to be leftists. This will deserve further analysis. It is further apparent that *Information Digest* was not only receiving information from government sources but also may have had its own agents in various organizations. One particular report in *Information Digest* indicates that the San Diego Convention Coalition, a consortium of protest groups planning for the 1972 Republican "Convention" then to be held in San Diego had been infiltrated by *Information Digest* sources."



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INFORMATION DIGEST

It will be apparent to the 60 people now receiving the *Information Digest* that much of the information is obtained by sources active in radical, so-called revolutionary groups. Unrestricted dissemination of this information can have the most serious consequences.

Recently the dissemination of information has caused problems to two sources and as a result three people have been removed from our mailing lists, and will not be receiving this material. In two instances we believe the problem was caused through stupidity; in one instance a problem was caused by a major breach of confidentiality and a total lack of regard for the accepted "Third Agency" rule.

It is requested that you keep the *Information Digest* for use within your own organization and do not share it with others. This issue (Nov. 19) in particular is sensitive and should not, under any circumstances, be "leaked" to any organization or person, however well-established their reputation. If, in your judgment material should be disseminated, please do not use it in I.D. format; scramble and rewrite!

This note also provides space to mention that our financial state is very tight; each edition of the *Digest* costs about \$70 in materials, supplies and postage, to which must be added time, labor and the ever increasing overhead of maintaining a filing/indexing service. In order to maintain the confidentiality of the services we cannot appeal for funds directly. However, each recipient knows how to make contact with some other person having a direct contact with the I.D. And it is suggested that to ensure that we continue, you allocate some money to us. This can be sent in any way that you believe will be both rapid and secure.

The information contained herein is of a confidential nature and is to be used only for the purposes stated herein.

For example, *Information Digest* had access to the internal documents of Vietnam Veterans Against the War, including letters from the 1966-67 period, notes from steering committees and background information on New York City-based VVAW leaders. Not all the VVAW information was accurate, especially its analysis of Communist Party influence within the group. They were, however, able to develop insight and understanding of the sectarian questions that finally split VVAW into two separate groups. While some of this information could have been obtained through public sources, *Information Digest* was somehow able to obtain discussion papers and agenda items for VVAW National Steering Committee Meetings prior to the meetings taking place. This information clearly came through the use of internal sources.

The "Third Agency" Rule

It is also obvious that *Information Digest* was particularly sensitive about its sources. The November 19, 1971 issue contained a lengthy dissertation revealing some of the inner workings of *Information Digest* finances, extent of circulation and the use to which it was put by its subscribers:

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CounterSpy has learned that *Information Digest* material was not just sent to police departments around the country nor is its use only for a John Birch Society "red scare". Both the Central Intelligence Agency and the National Security Agency have also received this information. Copies of a derogatory and inaccurate report on *CounterSpy* co-editor Winslow Peck from *Information Digest* appeared in his NSA file released under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). NSA attributed the information falsely accusing Mr. Peck of LSD usage during a particular event to a "private source". Other copies of *Information Digest* have appeared in CIA files released under the FOIA to other individuals. This has prompted the speculation by some experts that even though this was the product of the extreme right the *Information Digest* may have been sanctioned or in part financed by the massive illegal CIA domestic spying operation, CHAOS. (Interestingly, while Sheila worked in the National Lawyers Guild office, she sometimes signed correspondence "In chaos and struggle.")

Right Wing Files

The *Information Digest* also was probably circulated in other private rightist circles. John Rees is reported by the New York Assembly investigators to have edited between 1969 and 1970 the "National Laymen's Digest," a publication of the Church League of America, based in Wheaton, Ill., a Chicago suburb.

The CLA is a job blacklisting operation which claims to have "over 7,000,000 cross-indexed cards on individuals, organizations, publications and movements which have been attempting the destruction of the United States by way of internal subversion." It was the CLA that put out a 70-page pamphlet on the communist threat of the National Lawyers Guild, which merely expands the *Information Digest* coverage of the 1973 Guild Convention in Austin, Texas.

The Institute for American Democracy reported in an article on the CLA's blacklisting operations that CLA had notified their customers that they will receive a publication called *Information Digest* from a "shadowy outfit called National Goals, Inc."⁷ — the same "outfit" incorporated in New York by John Rees in 1968.⁸

In addition, the Wackenhut Agency, which has strong ties to the JBS, maintains files on thousands of Americans. Rees once worked for Wackenhut. And the JBS itself published, for profit, the *Biographical Dictionary of the Left* with dossiers on individuals and organizations similar to that found in *Information Digest*. *CounterSpy* has also heard that the International Association of Chiefs of Police may have received *Information Digest* and used the information to notify employers of activity in their plants and shops.

Obviously, the investigation of *Information Digest* has only just begun. Already it is clear that the constitutional right of millions of Americans has been violated by an enormous subculture of right-wing extremists, who have the potential to sabotage progressive organizations with impunity. Those who have produced *Information Digest* are extremely dangerous people.

There are several immediate concerns raised by *Information Digest* besides full investigation of those involved. The questions which should be asked by any investigation include:

(1) How widespread is the practice of laundering stolen information through government agencies and Congressional offices? *Information Digest* often reported from stolen information. Second, Congress should decide whether it is legal or proper for a Congressman to countenance the stealing of information by republishing it in the *Congressional Record*, as Larry McDonald has done.

(2) Has *Information Digest* been used as a blacklist? Several lawyers who have examined some 2,000 pages of the *Information Digest* believe that the information could have been used to keep prospective law students out of certain law schools because of their ties to unpopular causes or the National Lawyers Guild. It is interesting that one *Information Digest* report on Sally Quinn, linking her to Algerian communists, was circulated shortly before she was fired from CBS as a TV broadcaster.

(3) Has *Information Digest* and its reprinting in official government reports and the *Congressional Record* amounted to massive violations of privacy? What privacy laws have been broken? Who is liable?

(4) A serious legal question has been raised by the Oversight Office report. Before the appearance of *Information Digest* it has been assumed by most defense lawyers that the term "confidential informant" referred to an individual. But the report indicates that the New York State Police considered *Information Digest* such a "confidential informant". Many lawyers question the legality of this designation, and wonder in how many court cases over the past few years have the "confidential informants" of police departments been publications of questionable reliability and bias.

These are the questions which should be asked by official investigation. But *CounterSpy* is somewhat skeptical that Congress will undertake such an investigation considering the

record of such investigations in the past.

Most notable was that investigation in 1933 into an actual attempt to make a fascist puppet of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Major General Smedley Darlington Butler, one of the most remarkable generals in American history, uncovered the plot. A veteran of 35 years in the Marine Corps and twice a recipient of the Congressional Medal of Honor, he had finally decided that "war was a racket."

His reputation for patriotism, integrity and dedication to democracy coupled with his proclivity to speak the truth as he saw it, irrespective of official policy, made him a seemingly perfect front for the men who hated Roosevelt. They were people with determination, who, if it were possible to replace the President, sought to manipulate him through the person of an American Mussolini. Their short-sightedness prevented their realizing that Butler was obviously the wrong choice for the job.

The McCormack-Dirkstein House Committee on Un-American Activities hearing dealt with how Butler was approached by representatives of the arch-conservative American Liberty League — some of whose members are believed to be connected to the JBS today — who tried to persuade him to lead an army of veterans in demonstration against Roosevelt's silver standard. Butler quickly concluded that the silver standard controversy was being used as a subterfuge to lead veterans against Washington for truly sinister purposes. Upon discovering the full dimensions of the subterfuge, Butler went to Washington and blew the conspiracy wide open.

The *Philadelphia Record* and the *New York Post* said, under the headline "\$3,000,000 Bid for Fascist Army Bared": "Major General Smedley D. Butler revealed today that he has been asked by a group of wealthy New York brokers to lead a fascist movement to set up a dictatorship in the United States."

The group that approached him was the American Liberty League, which had brokerage head Grayson M.P. Murphy as its treasurer and Robert S. Clark as one of its financiers. One member of the National Executive Committee was John W. Davis, writer of pro-gold standard speeches. Its contributors included representatives of the Morgan, Du Pont, Rocke-

feller, Pew and Mellon interests. Directors of the League included Al Smith and John J. Raskob. The League later formed affiliations with pro-fascist, anti-labor and anti-semitic organizations.

It astonished Butler that former New York Governor Al Smith, who had lost the 1928 presidential race to Republican Hoover could be involved in a fascist plot backed by wealthy men. But the "happy warrior", who had grown up on New York's East Side, had traded his brown derby for a black one. He was now a business associate of the powerful Du Pont family, who had cultivated him through Du Pont official John J. Raskob, former chairman of the Democratic Party. Under their influence, Smith had grown more and more politically conservative following his defeat.

The Du Ponts owned a controlling interest in the Remington Arms Co. from which arms were to be supplied to Butler's invasion army of 500,000 men, many of which were to be recruited through the American Legion.

Chairman McCormack was himself a Legionnaire and the revelations of the plot implicating Legion officials might have been painful to him, but Butler also knew that McCormack was a determined foe of Nazi propaganda and a staunch supporter of New Deal measures. Butler counted on his indignation over the conspiracy to bring about a full-scale investigation by the Congress and the Department of Justice. But after a superficial investigation during which many of the principals involved refuted the testimony of Butler and others, the matter was dropped.

In 1964, Speaker of the House John W. McCormack recalled the plot in his speech before the Democratic Convention in Atlantic City, warning against right-wing extremists in the Barry Goldwater camp. The conspiracy inspired the novel *Seven Days in May*, made into a successful film, which portrayed a fascist plot by high-placed American conspirators to capture the White House and establish a military dictatorship under the pretext of saving the nation from communism. Few of the millions of Americans who read the novel or saw the film suspected that it was a solid basis in fact.⁹

Those who refuse to learn from history are doomed to repeat it.

FOOTNOTES

1. Rees may also be the same John Rees listed as a Lithuanian refugee born Vladas Hrikavicius who toured the country for the right-wing American Opinion Speakers Bureau, (February 19, 1964, p. 89) denouncing the "communist hordes who forced him to flee Lithuania by Ox-cart."

2. See "Dawn of a new day: Requiem for HISC/HUAC" by Sylvia E. Crane, *CounterSpy* Vol. 2, Issue 3, Spring/Summer 1975 for an analysis of the years of HISC/HUAC operations.

3. Read *The Radical Right* by Benjamin R. Epstein and Arnold Forster, Random House, New York, 1967; and William Turner's *Power on the Right*, Ramparts Press.

4. This is an alias used by John Rees Seeley, and not the policeman John O'Connor, who for a time infiltrated the VVAW for the D.C. MPD's Intelligence Division. O'Connor quit his undercover work when he became convinced that VVAW was engaged in legitimate dissent and that his spying activities were not justified police work.

5. Otepka has consistently been involved in the red-baiting of HISC and HUAC. (See: "The Trials of an Executive Witness," *Rally Magazine*, November, 1966, and "One Man Against the Establishment," *Christian Crusade*, January-February 1968.)

6. This rule demands that when information is transferred to a new consumer the original source, if different from the current source, be protected.

7. *Homefront*, Institute for American Democracy, March, 1969.

8. National Goals Incorporated was started by John Rees shortly after his work for Church League of America terminated.

9. Jules Archer, *The Plot to Seize the White House*, Hawthorn Books, Inc., New York, 1973.



The February 16, 1935, edition of the *Philadelphia Record*.